

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN SS-25

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS, FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PINT, MOPS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: LEBANON: SYRIAN PRESENCE

1. IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE SECRETARY'S DEPARTURE FROM WASHINGTON, WE CONSULTED WITH HIM AS REGARDS VARIOUS CONTINGENCY STEPS WE MIGHT HAVE TO CONSIDER REGARDING THE LEBANESE SITUATION. WE ADVISED HIM THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THE DISENGAGEMENT PROCESS IN BEIRUT IN APPROPRIATE WAYS. WE SUGGESTED THAT, IF TENSIONS WERE LOWERED AND SUCCESSFUL DISENGAGEMENT TOOK PLACE, WE MIGHT CONSIDER PROPOSING TO THE SYRIANS IN THE FAIRLY EARLY FUTURE, BUT PROBABLY NOT BEFORE CAMP DAVID, THAT THEY UNILATERALLY AND PUBLICLY ANNOUNCE THEIR PLANS FOR A FIRST STAGE WITHDRAWAL OF SOME MEN (E.G., 4,000) FROM

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LEBANON, COUPLING THIS WITH THE EXPLANATION THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY AND POLICE UNITS ARE NOW PREPARED TO TAKE OVER MORE SECURITY FUNCTIONS FROM THE ADF. WE SUGGEST DOING THIS NOT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BEIRUT PROBLEM BUT IN AN OVERALL LEBANESE AREA.

2. THERE WAS SOME EARLY INTELLIGENCE THIS YEAR THAT THE

SYRIANS WERE CONSIDERING AT ONE POINT REDUCING THEIR TOTAL MILITARY PRESENCE DURING ONE OF THEIR REGULAR ROTATIONS, BUT THEN OTHER EVENTS INTERVENED.

3. A UNILATERAL REDUCTION WOULD HAVE GREAT VALUE IN REDUCING CONCERNS ABOUT SYRIA'S ULTIMATE INTENTIONS, BOTH IN LEBANON AND ISRAEL, AS WELL AS WITH THE CONGRESS AND THE LEBANESE-AMERICAN COMMUNITY HERE. WE RECOGNIZE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE EASY TO BRING OFF, ALTHOUGH A PRACTICAL MAN LIKE ASSAD COULD PROBABLY SEE ITS VALUE, KNOWING THAT HE COULD ALSO QUICKLY SEND IN NEW UNITS IN EMERGENCIES.

4. THE SECRETARY DID NOT ENDORSE OR REJECT THIS IDEA, BUT ASKED WHAT YOU THOUGHT OF IT. WOULD THEREFORE APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS, AS WELL AS ANYTHING INFO ADDRESSEES WHICH TO CONTRIBUTE. CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

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